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# Traditionalism in Modern Chinese Painting Reconsidered

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## I. Introduction

At a time when terms like “globalization,” “plurality” and “diversity” are catch phrases for discussions of culture, and historians are using words like “transnational” to describe countries and regions developing under complex political and cultural identities, it seems as if tropes like “modern Chinese” should no longer be in use. Instead, works by Chinese artists, many of whom do not live in China and do not use traditional Chinese methods, should be designated by words that describe the methods and intentions of the artists. Yet, interestingly there is resurgence in the examination of what is “Chinese” in modern and/or contemporary Chinese art as demonstrated by the increased numbers of books, exhibitions, and conferences on the subject in the past few years. On the one hand, this is the result of the current interest in re – evaluating the meaning of art and modernity in art. On the other hand, it is a consequence of post – colonial studies, which have re – examined the interactions between the East and the West in the development of modernity in non – Western cultures. What has happened in all these re-considerations is the emergence of traditionalism as an important factor in the understanding of the development of modern art. Ironically, elements from the past have also become crucial in delineating distinctive cultural traits in our post – modern hybrid society.

So what is the role of traditionalism in modern art?<sup>1</sup> Modernity in art has, until recently, been defined as the rejection of tradition and the creation of new forms. For non-Western cultures there was an added twist in defining innovative forms to be those

that appropriated Western culture, which was construed to be modern. Today, with few exceptions, scholars no longer look at modernization as the simple dichotomy of the novel replacing the antiquated or the modern and progressive West versus the backward and traditional non – Western cultures. On the contrary, since the 1980s scholars have acknowledged the multiplicity of factors that formed modernity in different countries and cultures.<sup>2</sup> With regard to the relationship between traditionalism and modernization, it is now commonly accepted that the invention of tradition in defining national identity is a vital force in the modernizing process of nations.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in recent studies of art, rather than asserting a disavowal of traditional culture, scholars acknowledge that a modern nation's history of art is a narration of her past cultural expressions and modern art is a sequence of this national art history. In China the first art histories were written during the Republic Period, usually designated as the time between the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 to 1949 when the Chinese Communists established the People's Republic of China.<sup>4</sup> Historically, the idea of Chinese painting, or *zhongguohua*, was first discussed by artists and art historians at the turn of the twentieth century to differentiate traditional Chinese painting from Western paintings, termed *xiyanghua* or *xihua*. Eventually, because *zhongguohua*, which I will now refer to as Chinese painting or traditional painting, was too broad in scope, the binomial term *guohua*, literally translated as national painting, came to signify the modern *zhongguohua*. The fact that artists and art historians of the period felt a need to differentiate the two neologisms indicates that they consciously perpetuated traditional painting with the intention of making it an expression for modern China. This will be elaborated in the second part of my paper.

*Zhongguohua* and *guohua* have been part of the modern Chinese lexicon since they first appeared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continue to be used today. Yet, the meanings of these neologisms remain vague as indicated by the various ways they have

been used by different authors. In order to develop a more veritable story of how modern Chinese art evolved, art historians are now re – evaluating neglected traditional artists and their works in books and exhibitions. One example is the organization of exhibitions of the Richard Fabian collection by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco in 2000, and more recently, in 2007, by the Honolulu Academy of Arts.<sup>5</sup> Although the attention paid to traditional art is now beginning to fill the gaps in our knowledge of modern Chinese art history, there are still not many critical studies of how traditional art has been presented in the history of modern Chinese art. I believe that it is important to look at how art historians have dealt with traditional art and its relationship to modern art in order to discern the biases that may have affected our perceptions. I am also convinced that nationalism has contributed to the politics of art as much as it has also influenced the politics of criticism and how art is presented. The first part of this paper will be a brief analytical survey of how traditionalism in modern Chinese art has been studied. It is a preliminary study of a bigger ongoing project on the “metahistory” of modern art in China. I am recounting a simplified version here as a background for the focus of this paper, which is to attest that three works in the Richard Fabian collection, landscapes by Huang Binhong, Jin Cheng, and Pu Xinyu, are actually expressions of Chinese modernity and not simply antiquated paintings produced during the modern period.

## II. Perceptions of traditionalism in the histories of modern Chinese art

In a 1990 review article in *The Journal of Asian Studies* about new books on modern Chinese painting, Ralph Croizier wrote, “Until recently, modern Chinese art attracted little scholarly attention, either in China or in the West.”<sup>6</sup> He went on to explain the reasons for the lack of interest in modern Chinese painting: art historians were more interested in Chinese art of the great periods—Ming or before. In China, there was the

added dilemma of “anything on the twentieth century, even art, was too sensitive politically for safe handling.”<sup>7</sup> In the 1980s, the situation changed. As the political tensions created by the Cold War thawed, there was more availability of materials and also more openness to objective analysis of art developments that had not been possible until recently. The appearance of a wave of new books written in the 1980s was explained by Croizier: “...the reasons are both peculiar to the art field itself and more generally part of China’s remarkable internal and external changes in the post-Mao period.”<sup>8</sup> Almost two decades have passed since the publication of Croizier’s article, and modern Chinese painting scholarship has experienced even more dramatic changes. Writings about contemporary artistic developments as well as studies of the earlier twentieth century movements abound in numbers as well as in divergent points of views. It is an opportune time to look back at the state of the field of modern Chinese painting studies. In particular it is time to reconsider the role of traditionalism in the development of modern Chinese painting.

#### A. Before and during the 1970s

The lack of written studies on modern Chinese art history is not the result of dearth of materials. In fact, documentary resources related to modern Chinese art history are plentiful. The problem has been that these materials have not been compiled and written into art histories until recently for reasons discussed earlier. One of the exceptions is Michael Sullivan’s Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century. Published in 1959, it is the earliest and most important book to bring our attention to modern Chinese art. Sullivan opened his book with the dilemma faced by the artist P’ang Hsun-ch’in [Pang Xunqin] who was not accepted by either the “Chinese Painting” (kuo-hua) [guohua] or “Western Painting” (hsi-yang hua) [xiyang hua] section when he tried to submit his

works for inclusion in the 1944 Second National Exhibition in Chungking [Chongqing].<sup>9</sup> Pang worked mostly in oils depicting paintings in Western modernist styles. He also rendered realistic depictions of human figures in colored ink-wash on paper. Sullivan asked the question, “Was he [Pang] really a Chinese artist at all?” as a way to demonstrate the problem facing most modern Chinese artists. Sullivan explained the theme of his book with the following:

The struggle between East and West, between one tradition and the other, which is taking place within Asian society can now be seen as a generative process... Something of this tension, this sense of being cut adrift from one tradition and yet not fully masters of the other, must appear in the work of artists discussed in this book.<sup>10</sup>

If Sullivan thought that twentieth century Chinese art is a synthesis of the traditions of the East and West, what did he perceive to be the “tradition” of the East? In the chapter on traditional Chinese painting Sullivan spent a lot of time explaining literati art. He then presented brief discussions of modern traditional artists in the context of the political and social changes of the time. From his discussion, it seems that only artists who transformed aspects of the tradition were deemed innovative. Yet, he considered the efforts by the Lingnan artist Gao Jianfu as a failure. Sullivan wrote:

The artists of the *Ling-nan p'ai* [Lingnan pai] have acquired from Japan this distorted notion of the motives that inspire the Western painter, it is not surprising that their road to a new national art should have turned into a blind alley. The renaissance of Chinese art lay not in a new method, but in a new vision.<sup>11</sup>

So, what did Sullivan consider to be the “new vision”? Although the title of his book does not directly state that it is about new or modern Chinese art, we presume it to be about modern Chinese art since it is art produced in China during the twentieth century. Moreover, Sullivan had asked Herbert Read, the leading historian of modern art of the time, to introduce it. The place in the book where Sullivan directly used the word “modern” was the chapter in which he discussed Western – trained Chinese artists and their attempts at synthesizing Western painting methods with Chinese ideas about art. In short, the book focused on how Chinese artists responded to the West as the West was presumed by Sullivan and most art historians of the period to represent “modern.” And as indicated in the quote above, it was a commonplace to regard Chinese artists of the twentieth century to be “modern” only if he or she had successfully integrated the ideas of the East and West.

Michael Sullivan’s views were expanded by one of his students, Kao Mayching in her 1972 dissertation China’s Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937. Although in her dissertation Kao covered a narrower period of time and a more specific and detailed topic, she nonetheless expressed the sentiments of Sullivan, as evident in the following statement in her conclusion:

Although traditional art was inevitably eclipsed, it had its followers and would ultimately benefit most from the Western impact, since tradition could not be maintained in toto but could be renewed when the feeling and sensibilities of the past were brought to life again in some new form. The impact from the West provided the needed stimulus for refashioning the outmoded tradition.<sup>12</sup>

Kao did not elaborate on what she meant by “tradition.” She did not use the words zhongguohua or guohua in her research except when quoting directly from the

Chinese, as in her discussion of Gao Jianfu's xin guohua or new Chinese painting. Although she used the general terms "traditional art" to describe Chinese painting, we know that she meant the expressions of the literati. In short, most art historians working outside of China before the 1980s regarded "modern" to be a periodic designation for the twentieth century, the time when China was forced to confront the West and a disintegrating imperial dynasty, and to eventually become a modern nation – state. They also defined the word "modern" from a Western modernist point of view. In other words, they believed that China has an unchanging past and an essential culture that determines its national identity. To modernize meant to integrate the best of the Chinese tradition with the progressive ideas of the West. In general, scholars considered Chinese painters who continued to work in the traditional styles and methods to be conservative and retrogressive.

In China, artists and art historians who worked during the Republic Period had divergent ideas about traditional art and cannot easily be summarized. Already mentioned earlier, the divisive political situation in China since the founding of the Chinese Republic, which has continued to the present – day tension between China and Taiwan, resulted in the writing of antithetical discourses of China's past. At the same time, the disintegrating political situation made it difficult to write any significant art histories. If histories were written they usually ended with the Qing dynasty.<sup>13</sup> If there were publications about modern artists and modern artistic developments, which were numerous, they were usually anecdotal biographies or discussions about methods and techniques, not historical narratives. Interestingly authors of critical essays discussed art issues based on either the East – West binary or the dichotomy between old and new. The differences in the attitudes of the writers toward traditional art often reflected their political affiliations or ideological leanings. In other words, Chinese artists and art historians of the Republic Period who believed that traditional Chinese art was

represented by literati art were often sympathizers of the Guomindang, or the Nationalist Party, that purported to support Confucian ideals in the running of the state. On the other hand, artists who identified with socialist or communist ideas were inclined to be more open to folk art as examples of traditional art.

The political tensions between the two major opposing parties escalated into civil war, resulting in the establishment of the two Chinas in 1949 – the People’s Republic of China on the mainland and the Republic of China in Taiwan. From 1949 to the 1970s, or the period of the Cold War, the discussions about traditional art polarized into the extremist political propaganda of the Communist Party versus the Guomindang. In their attempts to identify themselves as the legitimate “China,” the two governments wrote their own histories, including art history. In Taiwan, traditional art continued to be defined as the art of the literati while artists on the mainland considered folk art to be the tradition of the nation. Most of the art historical writings on each side of the straits were now unified according to their own political ideologies. Artists who moved with the Guomindang to Taiwan were not discussed in texts published in China. Likewise in Taiwan artists who stayed behind on the mainland were erased from art historical writings. During the Cold War period, issues in modern art were no longer simply based on the East – West binary or the dichotomy between old and new. Under the two regimes, art could be expressed in either traditional or Western forms or techniques. To be modern meant to be politically, socially, and economically progressive for the country. So, the consideration for artists was to make art works that reflected what was good for the nation, based on the ideologies of the respective ruling parties in China and Taiwan. Again, although the writings on art abound and were unified in their themes, there was still no work of scholarly significance written during the Cold War period. Until recently much of the writings of this period were regarded as propaganda and were deemed inconsequential for our understanding of modern Chinese art history.

## B. The 1980s and After

In 1971 the People's Republic of China was admitted to the United Nations taking the place of the Republic of China in Taiwan as the Chinese representative. Since then the international politics and economics of China and Taiwan have undergone major transformations, which, in turn have also brought up questions about cultural identity, especially for the people in Taiwan.<sup>14</sup> These changes occurred at around the same time that new approaches and thinking about history, art, and modernity were being asked in academic studies around the world. These new critical approaches, such as feminist criticism, post – colonial criticism, deconstruction, New Historicism, and others, have led to the publication of studies that offer fresh outlooks and new insights on old subjects. In studies about China, ripples could be felt in the traditional historical methodologies. For example, Jonathan Spence introduced innovative approaches to Chinese history with his publications of micro–histories on the death of a common woman named Wang (1978).<sup>15</sup> In the 1980s, Paul Cohen's Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past critically examined modern historiography.<sup>16</sup> It was also in the 1980s that research on the inter – connection between China and Japan appeared, one example being Joshua Fogel's book on Naitô Konan (1984).<sup>17</sup> In the area of Chinese art history, the approaches and methods did not change as dramatically as in the other fields. Nonetheless, from the 1980s, we do begin to find more art historical writings focusing on specialized topics or ideas. It became harder to find books that made sweeping statements about the spirit of Chinese art. The trend in academic research was to examine particulars rather than writing the grand narrative of Chinese art. This had its impact on the writing of modern Chinese art history.

On the subject of modern art, art historians such as T.J. Clark began to re-evaluate the meaning of modernism in the West.<sup>18</sup> Most art historical studies after the 1980s make a distinction between the meanings of modern, modernism, modernity, and modernization, to either signify a time period, a process, an idea, or a style. Henceforth, it is possible for an artist from a non – Western culture to practice modernism, a word that describes an idea that is now considered distinctively Western European and American. Along this same line, it is recognized that a non – Western culture can experience its own particular modernity, one that is different in intention, form, and technique from Western modernism.<sup>19</sup> The acceptance of the multiplicity of Chinese history and modernity has generated a host of studies that are as different as the plurality of approaches and focus. Since the purpose of this paper is not to offer a comprehensive review of the state of the field, I will briefly introduce a few works to demonstrate the changing attitudes about traditionalism in modern Chinese art. One that stands out is Chu – tsing Li’s Trends in Modern Chinese Painting.<sup>20</sup> Published in 1979, it presents a different view of Chinese art that is now commonplace. First, Li considered traditional Chinese paintings produced during the twentieth century to be modern expressions. Unlike Sullivan and Kao, Li limited “Chinese painting” to include only works done with materials of ink and brush on paper or silk. Secondly, he expanded the meaning of “Chinese artists” to cover those who worked not only in the geographical China but also artists working in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. Although Li did not explicitly explain his way of thinking, it is possible to ascertain the reason behind his extension of the scope of his research to include the Chinese diasporas as a result of his background as a cross – cultural Chinese art historian. Li is an early example of the global scholar who was trained and works in the United States and continues to have close affinities with families, friends, and colleagues in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

As mentioned earlier, in 1990 Ralph Croizier wrote a review of new writings on modern Chinese art in China and the West during the 1980s. I will draw on his review as a starting point to discuss books that dealt with traditionalism in modern Chinese art. Croizier chose books that discussed artists who were active from as early as the nineteenth century to the period after the Cultural Revolution. The books he reviewed also dealt with art in different media. The most notable feature of Croizier's review was his taking a China – centered perspective. This point of view reflects what Bruce Cumings calls the post–Cold War “parallax visions” of scholars in the West in changing their focus of Chinese studies from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China as the only China.<sup>21</sup> For example, Chu – tsing Li's book, which discussed artists working not only in China but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan, was not included in the review. The China – centered focus can aptly be illustrated by the attention Croizier paid to Robert Ellsworth's three volume set, Later Chinese Painting and Calligraphy, 1800-1950 (1986).<sup>22</sup> In Ellsworth's selection of artists, he considered only those who worked in mainland China; or in the case of those who later emigrated abroad, on their works produced while in China. More important, Ellsworth reflected the new approach taken by historians of looking back to factors within Chinese society that led to modernity. Relying on the research of young Chinese scholars, for example Wan Qingli, Ellsworth began his discussion with developments in the nineteenth century by asserting that the jinshi xue, or the epigraphic movement of the period, was the catalyst for a modern renaissance in Chinese painting. In addition, Ellsworth's collecting of modern paintings and his eventual donation of the bulk of his collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art demonstrated the change in the attitudes of museum curators and art historians about modern Chinese painting. Generally speaking, museums had not been interested in Chinese art that were made after the Qing period. By and large, it was from the 1980s that museums in the West and China increasingly collected and

displayed modern Chinese art. I believe the change can be explained, on the one hand, by China's rising position in world politics and economics. At the same time, interests in modern Chinese art reflected art historians' and museum curators' more inclusive attitudes about Chinese modern art to include not only western – style painting, but also traditional works and even political prints and posters. More important, the meteoric rise in the activities of contemporary Chinese art has also expanded our notion of Chinese art.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to books by Western (mostly American) art historians, Croizier also brought to our attention works written in the 1980s by Chinese scholars. As noted earlier, most Chinese writings about art have been articles in journals, monographs, and biographies of individual artists. Since the 1980s, the period after the Cultural Revolution, Chinese historians worked towards re – writing the past, especially the parts that had been forgotten or misconstrued. As part of this so-called xin guoxue, or “new national studies,” several art history books have been published.<sup>24</sup> Of special interest are two that are the first Chinese histories of the art of the twentieth-century. One of these is the modern volume of Zhongguo meishu tongshi (General History of Chinese Art), a ten – volume work edited by Wang Bomin.<sup>25</sup> Although the approach was traditional and still followed the basic Communist view of history, it nonetheless was comprehensive and included discussions of traditional painters, such as Pu Xinyu, who were not supporters of the Communist revolution. In contrast to this general art history is the smaller book Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi (A History of Contemporary Chinese Painting) by Zhang Shaoxia and Li Xiaoshan.<sup>26</sup> Like the modern volume of Zhongguo meishu tongshi, Zhang and Li covered most of the important artistic developments in the twentieth century. Zhang and Li differed in their approach by presenting these developments from a modernist perspective. In other words, they looked upon art works that transformed traditional art as innovative and more significant for modern art history.

### C. Revisionist or nationalistic history?

Today traditional art is widely recognized as a viable factor in the development of modern Chinese art. Since the 1980s, publications on the various developments of modern Chinese art have proliferated to the extent that it is difficult to put them into simple categories. For now, I will bring attention to a few examples that deal with the issue of tradition. In recent years, as a consequence of recognizing the transnational nature of cultural developments, there have been more studies on deliberating the influence of Japan on Chinese modern art. In 1988 Ralph Croizier wrote about the influence of Japan in his book entitled Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906-1951.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Aida Yuen Wong presented the traditional art form as the “oriental modern” in her book Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (2006).<sup>28</sup> The authors who delve into the external agents of change (previously the West and more recently Japan) in Chinese art tend to be Westerners or Chinese who work in the West or Taiwan. As might be expected, art historians in China, especially those writing after World War II, have a predilection to focus on internal Chinese agents of change. For example, Wan Qingli’s Bing fei shuailuo de bainian: shijiu shiji zhongguo huihua shi (The Century Was Not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting), published in 2005, is an in – depth discussion of the different internal factors, such as economic, social, and intellectual changes that formed a distinctively modern Chinese art.<sup>29</sup> Wan Qingli and several other Chinese scholars, such as Lang Shaojun, write their histories of modern Chinese art from a literati point of view, i.e., focusing on works that are done by literati or inspired by literati ideals.

Julia Andrews in her award-winning 1994 study Painters and Politics in the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979, attempted to present a comprehensive and objective history of modern Chinese art.<sup>30</sup> Her study of the institutional history of artistic developments in China reflects a recent orientation in academic research that aspires to illuminate the factors behind the formation of our ideas about art. Finally, museum curators and art historians are expanding on their definition of who is Chinese by including artists from the greater China – China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Chinese diasporas – in their books and exhibitions about Chinese art. An example is the 1998 exhibition A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China curated by Julia Andrews and Kuiyi Shen for the Guggenheim Museum.<sup>31</sup> More recently in 2007, the Seattle Asian Art Museum held an exhibition of Michael Sullivan's collection of modern Chinese painting called Of Nature and Friendship: Modern Chinese Painting from the Khoan and Michael Sullivan Collection.<sup>32</sup> In 2008, the Harvard University Art Museums and the Phoenix Art Museum organized the exhibition, A Tradition Redefined: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Ink Paintings from the Chu-tsing Li Collection, 1950-2000.<sup>33</sup>

The writings and approaches in the analysis of modern Chinese art have multiplied as rapidly as the numbers of new and varied critical methods have developed since the 1980s. The openness in academic research has also made more materials available to historians. On the other hand, the diversity of materials and perspectives has, ironically, all but prevented art historians from expounding on the developments in a straightforward linear approach. In all their differences, then, the authors discussed above represent the current direction of diverse historical studies, undertaken by scholars in China and the West, that challenges the paradigm of Western – centered modernity. Although they all examine the role of traditionalism in modern Chinese art, they differ in their positions depending on their definition of modernity. Some, like Ellsworth and

Wang, see traditional art as an aid to modernization or in itself a modern form of expression. Others, like Sullivan or Zhang Shaoxia and Li Xiaoshan, consider traditional art as retrogressive and a sign of the conservatism of Chinese culture. To be sure, the works discussed here are only a limited sampling of existing research on the topic of traditionalism in modern Chinese art. Today art historians are working with more materials and are giving us fresh and more in – depth understanding about the evolution of modern Chinese art. With these multifarious new histories of modern Chinese art there is now a need to ask the questions: What is new about the discourses? Are these histories revisionist? Are they really alternative approaches or do they continue to reflect the biases of national histories? Are they temporary or will they create a new paradigm for modern Chinese art? I believe that the history of modern art in China was and will continue to be nationalistic. China, although a world power, is still undergoing cultural as well as political, economic, and social modernization. In the second part of my paper I will explain why I think so by illustrating how the factors of nationalism and traditionalism are still crucial elements in the modernizing process of China’s art and culture.

### III. Traditionalism and Nationalism in Modern Chinese Painting

For the rest of my paper, I will focus on an aspect of traditionalism that has been misunderstood or neglected by many of the art historians discussed above. This is the role that the most conservative of the traditional artists played in the establishment of national identity.<sup>34</sup> The disregard is not out of ignorance. Rather, it may be a matter of not pointing to the obvious. Or it may be that art historians avoid politicizing art now that it has seemingly freed itself from the domain of Cold War politics. Whatever the reason, I believe that the subject of national identity cannot be ignored in discussions of

modern art. As mentioned earlier, a nation's history of art is a narration of her past cultural expressions and modern art is a sequence of this national art history. Therefore, since histories of art, whether traditional or modern, are defined in order to designate cultural or national identity, the history of art cannot be discussed apart from the subject of nationalism. In fact, my brief survey of how traditional art has been deliberated by art historians also illustrates how the issues of modernity and the politics of nationalism are often behind the conflicting attitudes presented in art historical discourses. It is by acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between traditional art and national identity that one of its by-products, guohua, or modern Chinese (traditional) painting, can then unquestionably be regarded as a type of modern Chinese art. In the following discussion I will show that modern Chinese artists consciously continued to paint traditional forms in order to distinguish the "Chineseness" of their art from the Western forms, and at the same time to demonstrate that these works are viable forms for a modern China. I will clarify how Chinese artists and art historians achieved this self-awareness of being modern by creating a national painting, or guohua, through the discovery of modern elements in traditional forms.

#### A. National identity

In the early 1980s studies such as Ernest Gellner's Nations and Nationalism or Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism made us re-think the nature of nationalism.<sup>35</sup> More influential on the cultural front is Anderson's Imagined Communities, which argued that nationalism is a modern phenomenon.<sup>36</sup> According to Anderson, before the development of modern nation-states, cultural identity was associated with religion. Nations replaced this religious culture with their own uniquely constructed national cultures, which included

art. Since its publication in 1983, the attitude towards traditional culture has changed from it being a retardant for modernization into a catalyst. At the turn of the twentieth century when China first confronted the military and cultural intrusions of the modern West and Japan, intellectuals, political revolutionaries, and reformers all sensed an urgency to save their country from demise. Different ideas were put forth for modernizing China, from the revolutionary proposal to abolish the old to the conservative project to discover national culture through tradition. In the arts, some believed in complete westernization; and others endeavored to re-organize national heritage and re-define Chinese tradition. Some tried to find a balance by advocating an integration of the best of the East and West. Many of these artists advocated westernization of traditional subjects or found parallelism between modern concepts and tradition. Whatever solutions were proposed, the ultimate goal was political: to form a national art for modern China. However, identifying what is considered tradition and whose tradition is viable as national form were contentious issues and remain so to this day.

Tradition was assumed to be essential and timeless and therefore was not questioned. The problem was in agreeing what this tradition represented. For example, Marxists like Qu Qiubai considered folk art to be the truly authentic representation of Chinese culture. In contrast, artists and art historians like Huang Binhong, whom we will discuss later, pointed to the art of the literati as the essence of Chinese ideals. Today, the literati painting tradition is generally accepted as representative of Chinese painting. In the past few years, studies have examined how this notion of Chinese painting tradition was invented for the purpose of constructing a national culture.<sup>37</sup> The denotation of literati painting as Chinese traditional art was formed through the interlocking and interactions among different modern art institutions that were established during the Republic Period. First and foremost was the development of art history writings, which delineated the periodization of Chinese artistic development that we still use today. This

concept was reinforced by art education, public exhibitions, and museums. The display of representative Chinese paintings domestically in national exhibitions and local museums as well as in international exhibitions all helped to instill a consciousness of a national art form, which was generally considered to be the art of the literati. At the same time, these discourses of art were published as texts in art education and in popular media such as newspapers and art journals demonstrating what Anderson called print capitalism, a factor that contributed to the development of new national cultures and the creation of specific cultural forms such as art history. In the end this link between traditionalism and national identity was connected through the discovery of modern elements in traditional art.<sup>38</sup>

#### B. Discovery of “modern” in traditional art

When Chinese artists first confronted the problem of how to modernize, their notion of “modern” was Westernization. With regard to traditional Chinese painting, then, the issue that came to the forefront was the lack of realism. The initial solution was the introduction of Western design and painting techniques in the first art schools to train technicians for national enterprises like road – building and other engineering projects.<sup>39</sup> When political stability disintegrated into warlordism during the early years of the Chinese Republic, intellectuals, and artists felt a desperate urgency to overhaul even the most venerated traditions, such as literati painting. In the now often quoted statement by Chen Duxiu, one of the champions of the May Fourth Movement, Chen wrote:

To reform Chinese painting, one has to revolutionize the style sanctioned by Wang Shigu [Wang Hui; 1632–1717], and one has to adopt the realist spirit of Western

painting...If it cannot be overthrown, the canon they have formed will become the major barrier for importing Realism.<sup>40</sup>

Earlier, reformers like Kang Youwei and Cai Yuanpei had expressed the same sentiments about the problem of Chinese painting. Both Kang and Cai had spent considerable time abroad and were quite impressed by the scientific realism of the West. It was natural that artists like Xu Beihong, who adapted academic-style realism which he learned in Europe, became the leader of the modern art movement.

However, the appropriation of modernist concepts by non – Western cultures is never simple. David Der – wei Wang (2001) observed in his examination of the debate about the “real” between the painter Xu Beihong and the poet Xu Zhimo that there was a basic problem in their readings of what modernism signified which resulted in their misunderstandings. Another indication of the ambiguity of the meaning of what modernism represented for modern Chinese painting is illustrated in Xu Beihong’s later development. He changed from being an advocate of complete Westernization to an eager promoter of traditional art. His synthesis of using ink and brush to paint realistic modern subjects is now designated as successful examples of modern Chinese (i.e. traditional) painting, or guohua. Likewise, Gao Jianfu and his colleagues of the Lingnan School who added western techniques of perspectives and shading in their depictions of traditional subjects, such as landscapes, are now also cited as the earliest successful modern Chinese painters.<sup>41</sup> Some of the traditional artists and art historians of the Republic Period would probably take issue with this characterization.

Some traditional artists actually used Western realism in their rendition of traditional subjects. Curiously, their works have not been considered seriously until recently. One such example is Cheng Zhang, an artist also represented in the Richard Fabian collection. Cheng used his training as a biologist to paint realistic renditions of

subjects from nature, such as birds, animals, and plants, using ink and brush. His paintings were considered failures or weak attempts of modernization. Cheng's methods are far more technically accomplished than those of Xu Beihong or Gao Jianfu. The reasons behind the different assessments of the use of realism in traditional painting are topics for further discussions in another paper. It may simply be that Xu and Gao were outspoken about their intentions at modernizing. They were not only artists; they also taught art, wrote about art, and organized and participated in public exhibitions. More important, they were both political activists who incorporated their ideas about painting with their goals of creating a new Chinese nation. In other words, Xu and Gao were part of the modern art movement while Cheng Zhang was not. The above examples show that art historians often categorized artists depending on where they stood regarding their definitions of art and national forms, and their understanding of modernity and national identity.

A more successful attempt at the co-opting of modernity in traditional art can be demonstrated by how Chinese artists and art historians of the Republic Period revived literati painting as the "oriental modern."<sup>42</sup> The most important Chinese proponent of this idea was Chen Hengke, author of "The Value of Literati Painting," one of the most influential works in reinforcing the relevance of traditionalism in modern Chinese painting. As Aida Yuen Wong discussed in her recent book Parting the Mists, Chen was inspired by the Japanese art historian Omura Seigai's discussions of the parallelism between Chinese and Japanese art and ideas of the modern. Wong is the first to give a comprehensive analysis, in English, of the significance of Chen for modern Chinese painting. In her book, she devoted a chapter to the topic of literati painting as the "oriental modern." In brief, Wong showed how the artists identified literati painting as the "quintessential Oriental art," and delineated characteristics that were decidedly "Oriental." From these Chen and his colleagues formulated overlapping concepts that are

oppositional and at the same time mutually dependent. Yuen lists the three polarities between literati and Western painting as follows: subjectivism/objectivism, spirit resonance/realism, and Oriental/Western painting.

For Chen Hengke and many traditional artists, it was possible to explain their modernity by illustrating the similarities between their ideas and modern Western ideas. Chen saw notions in Western modernist movements, such as Post – impressionism, Cubism, and Futurism that reflect the same attitude about painting that the Chinese literati held, which is to “deemphasize the objective and focus on the subjective.”<sup>43</sup> Huang Binhong, one of Chen’s contemporaries, wrote on one of his landscapes the following sentiment:

“Recently scholars from Europe have maintained that artistic creation start with an appreciation of the spiritual. Gentlemen study the ideal, common people study matter...”<sup>44</sup>

Here Huang described the attributes of traditional Chinese painting with terms from European philosophical works translated into Chinese. He emphasized the importance of “spiritual” for both cultures. His juxtaposition of the opposing idealism and materialism reflected Chen’s discourse on the parallelism between the East and West. In line with Chen’s and other traditional artists’ belief in the importance of concepts, the method of realism that was considered to represent the modernity of the West by artists like Xu Beihong and Gao Jianfu was not accepted by Chen because it was not compatible with the spirit of the literati. Instead, they looked to works by the Song masters, whom they considered to have successfully conveyed literati ideals in their paintings. However, to further emphasize the complexity of cultural appropriation, many of these traditional

artists, paradoxically, also claimed that there is a distinctive Chinese realism in Song paintings. Cheng Zhang and Jin Cheng are two examples.

#### IV. Song paintings as national forms

Although the discussion above is a condensed analysis of the role of traditional art in the very complex development of modern Chinese art, I hope I have demonstrated its significance. I will end my paper with an elaboration of how these elements are manifested in works of three artists. As I mentioned earlier, in searching for a national form, many artists looked to Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) paintings as the representation of orthodox transmission (zhengtong) in Chinese painting. I will illustrate this more clearly with my discussion of Huang Binhong, Jin Cheng, and Pu Xinyu. The dominant reason for many artists' close affinity with Song paintings is because they discerned in Song art the ideals of modernity. On the one hand, they found parallelism in the realism of Song period and Western art, and on the other, the individualism and expressive spirit of Chinese literati painting and modern art in the West. This attention to Song painting was reinforced by new historical studies of the period. One of the results of the nation – building during the early Republic Period was an intense intellectual re – evaluation of the Chinese past. The re – writing of histories, referred to as the xin shixue or new historiography, presented the Tang and Song periods as the culmination of early dynasties.<sup>45</sup> The new historians believed in the superiority of the Tang and Song dynasties as precedents for modern culture; and they pointed to examples such as the mastery of technologies and the expression of humanistic ideals in art and literature. Many artists and art historians readily accepted the Song as the watershed of modern China. A more practical reason why Song (rather than Tang) paintings were important for modern artists was that many of the earliest extant and recorded paintings and

writings were attributed to the Song. The artists to be discussed below all showed affinity for the Song. All three artists were active in Beijing during the early years of the Republic Period, and because of their varying backgrounds all three had access to the Palace Museum collection. As a result their works differed from other traditionalist artists working in other parts of China. While living in Beijing, the three artists were able to study directly the old masterpieces in the Palace collection, and thus their works are considered to be more classically traditional in contrast to the more calligraphic and expressive work of the southern Jiangnan artists, many of whom were associated with the epigraphic movement.<sup>46</sup>

#### A. Huang Binhong (1865 – 1955)

Since the 1980s, there have been numerous research projects and studies on Huang Binhong, considered by many to be one of the most creative and influential modern Chinese painters of the Republic Period. His active participation in the artistic institutions during the long span of his life is familiar to all so much so that I will not repeat them here.<sup>47</sup> I will only speak of his relationship with Song paintings. We identify Huang as a strong advocate of the national essence movement; hence, we know he was a firm believer in revitalizing traditional forms. His writings and paintings demonstrate his dedication to preserving the past and in his firm belief about the value of literati painting for the preservation of Chinese culture, which he believed was in demise. Most studies have discussed Huang's indebtedness to the past by illustrating the importance he placed on the use of ink and brush.<sup>48</sup> These studies have also pointed to his modernity by demonstrating his use of ink and brush as expressive and abstracted renditions of nature. This is evident in the landscape discussed earlier, now in the Huang Binhong Memorial Museum in Hangzhou. The painting is typical of many of Huang's later works:

seemingly blotches of black ink on paper, but actually a painterly depiction of mountains and trees. Huang's use of old ink, which sometimes left coarse and textured imprints, and his rendering of dynamic brushstrokes, did make his landscapes seem to be painterly abstractions. It is therefore understandable that many critics regard his works as the most modern among those of traditional painters.

However, Huang was actually a very ardent proponent of tradition. In his earliest writings, he already considered the understanding of methods from the past to be crucial in re-constructing a national painting. As to be expected, he considered Song paintings to be the quintessential form of Chinese art. Many of his early works do reflect variations of brushstrokes, and compositions that seem to be copies of Song masterpieces. The painting, "Landscape with a Green Roof," now in the Fabian collection is one such example.<sup>49</sup> The inscription on the painting states that he emulated a Southern Song artist. In 1936 to 1937 Huang was asked by the Chinese government to authenticate paintings in the Palace Museum collection. In his notebook sketches of the paintings he studied, there are several pages with mountains and rocks similar to the rocks in the painting now in the Fabian collection.<sup>50</sup> Next to one of these notebook sketches, Huang annotated that he was emulating Li Tang's rocks. If we look at the best - known landscape by Li Tang, "Wind in Pines Among Myriad Valleys," now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, we can see a resemblance in the shape of the mountains and the axe-cut brushstrokes used to delineate the rocks in the two works. However, Huang's painting in the Fabian collection is clearly not a close copy of the actual Li Tang. In fact, Huang's rocks are oddly shaped and his brushstrokes are very individualistic, rendering his painting to be imprints of ink rather than an illustration of a natural landscape scene. From this painting we can see that Huang's relationship with the past was one of capturing the spirit of ancient masters through their methods, not a copy of the subject of old landscapes.

In his later years, which also happened to be the time of the Sino – Japanese war and the early years of the Communist regime, Huang looked at Song paintings less and less as painting models; rather, he found spiritual inspiration in Song paintings. Huang’s believed that revival of traditional painting was the solution to save China from disintegration, which he explained in Chinese as huaxue fuxing shi jiuguo.<sup>51</sup> He was now even more convinced of the symbolic stature of Song monumental landscape paintings as a national form. He considered the Song period to be an example of greatness developing out of the discord of the Five Dynasties period (907–960). Finally, he felt that the loftiness of the Song literati rose above the mundane world and should serve as an example for the modern Chinese as they struggled in the chaos of war-torn China.<sup>52</sup> There is not necessarily a link between Huang’s patriotism and the style of his late paintings, but I think the fervor of his nationalistic pride is reflected in the strength and power of many of his late works, completed when he was an old man in his eighties and nineties.

Undoubtedly, as evident in his paintings and writings, Huang is a great master of modern Chinese painting. However, assessments of his significance as a painter are often based on formalistic considerations: that is aspects of his work are modernist or expressive. Art historians tend to shy away from focusing on the nationalistic aspect of his artistic intentions for the simple reason that they are not sure how to categorize him politically. Huang expressed the same nationalistic belief about the importance of traditional painting for the salvation of China all through his long life, but he was never really affiliated with any political parties. Indeed, it was because of his steadfast belief in the value of Chinese tradition that Huang was and continues to be a powerful force in modern China. His landscapes are now generally recognized as national icons representing the most successful expressions of modern traditional painting, and are now high-priced items on the international art market.

## B. Jin Cheng (1878 – 1926)

Jin Cheng did not have a long career, which could be one reason why he is not well known. However, his importance in the development of modern Chinese painting cannot be diminished by his obscurity. For example, Jin was a member of the committee of the Institute for Exhibiting Antiquities (Guwu chenlie suo) in the Forbidden City. Committee members were instrumental in compiling and cataloguing the imperial palace collection: this project enabled Jin to have personal contact with ancient art. Jin was also very involved in the Beijing art world. He was a leading figure of the Society for the Study of Chinese Painting (Zhongguo huaxue yanjiuhui), one of the more successful art organizations that promoted the study of traditional Chinese painting during the Republic Period. In addition to holding art classes, the society also organized public exhibitions. Jin Cheng was a founding member of *Hu She*, one of the more influential art journals of the period that discussed traditional art. Although a fervent advocate of revitalizing traditional art, Jin also had an open mind toward modernity and the West, having traveled abroad both as a law student and as a government representative. He agreed with reformers that Western realism played a valid role in modern expressions. However, he did not think that to be modern one had to Westernize. In his writings about China's art history, he divided the development into three sections.<sup>53</sup> The first was antiquity to the Han period (206 B.C. – A.D. 220), which he considered as comparable to the Roman period in its interests in painting about daily life. The second period was from the Jin to the Song, when art reached its apex through imperial support, the development of academies and the mastery of techniques and materials. Finally, the period after the Song saw the dominance of idea – painting. In this categorization, Jin shared with Chen

Hengke the belief that it is possible to look at Chinese art development from a Western perspective--in this case Western historiography.

In Jin's outlook toward Chinese art, the ancients always paid attention to sketching from life, or painting according to life – likeness. Jin believed that it is important to understand the methods of past masters, but only to know how they depicted nature. Jin's landscape, "Autumn Clearing at a Fishing Village," now in the Fabian collection is a careful study of a painting that he presumed to be by Guan Tong of the Five Dynasties.<sup>54</sup> The painting is indeed a close copy of a landscape painting attributed to Guan Tong, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. Notwithstanding the problem that the painting he emulated is no longer believed to be by Guan Tong, Jin's close study of the landscape illustrates his interest in learning directly from past masters, not from manuals or later paintings. His achievements in art are distinguished by his use of traditional techniques, such as the forms and brushstrokes found in the "Guan Tong" painting, to render landscapes of his own compositions.

### C. Pu Xinyu (1896 – 1963)

The last artist I will discuss is Pu Xinyu, generally considered to the most conservative of the modern Chinese painters. He was a member of China's last imperial family. He developed as an artist in the confines of the old palace and later participated in art activities in the city of Beijing. In his later years he moved with the Nationalist government to Taiwan and was considered the scion of traditional Chinese painting. Pu was no doubt influenced by and benefited from the collective effort to preserve and promote traditional Chinese painting. Because he was a member of the imperial family and worked mostly in the Southern Song style, Pu is categorized as an academic painter. At a time when artists and art historians were eager to learn more about the past,

especially the period of the Song, Pu was instrumental in re-introducing the academic painting style that had been denigrated since the Ming dynasty. Pu's painting in the Fabian collection is entitled with the same name of the painting he copied, "Listening to the Wind in the Pines," a work by the Southern Song painter Ma Lin, now in the National Palace Museum, Taipei.<sup>55</sup> Pu's interest in the Southern Song painting tradition led him to the works of another group of forgotten artists, who combined the literati and academic styles. By reviving these mid-Ming artists, such as Tang Yin and Qiu Ying, and linking them with the Southern Song tradition, Pu provided a new understanding of Chinese art history, and for our purpose today, opened up a new avenue for modern Chinese painters. This aspect of his traditionalism is, I believe, the modernity of his art.

In addition to Pu's artistic contribution to modern Chinese painting, his importance can also be linked with the politicization of his art as guohua (national or Chinese painting) in Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> Ironically, Pu was vehemently against associating himself with politics, but, nonetheless, he was used as a political symbol most of his life. During the later part of his life he moved to Taiwan with the Guomintang government and was an important factor in the government's success in constructing a Chinese cultural identity in Taiwan. After World War II, mainland artists, who moved with the Guomintang government to Taiwan, and the local Taiwanese artists were all without a clear sense of national identity. The mainlanders had lost their ties with the geographical territory of their homeland China. Although the Guomintang government brought over their policies and programs from the 1930s to the 1940s, they had to reinstate these on an island that had been colonized by Japan and during a time when the world was dominated by the Americans and Russians, and their Cold War politics. The Taiwanese, many of whom only knew their identity as colonial subjects of Japan, also had to redefine themselves as citizens of a new Chinese state. In a sense, they all had a fresh start, without the burdens from the past, in defining their ideas about "national" forms. Pu, a

member of the imperial family, was one of the most important symbols of the Guomintang government's link with the China they had lost. In other words, Pu represented the authenticity of a national culture that was sought as a facet of modernity.

After the Nationalist government settled in Taiwan, one of the first debates in art was about “orthodox Chinese painting” (zhengtong guohua).<sup>57</sup> When the Guomintang government took over Taiwan from Japan, it continued with the implementation of public art exhibitions. The division of the Western art and Eastern art categories was maintained, but for obvious political reasons, the Japanese terms nihonga or tôyôga (Japanesestyle or Eastern–style painting) was changed to guohua (national or Chinese painting). As more and more artists from mainland China took over the role of jurors for the exhibitions, the differences between the tôyôga style of the Taiwanese artists and the guohua style of the artists from the mainland became issues in the selection process. The eventual triumph of guohua is used aptly to illustrate the hegemony of the Guomintang government in influencing the island's cultural development. Pu and the other the mainland artists were actually small in number and shared similar ideas about art and politics. Many were artists associated with art schools established by the Guomintang government, and others were scholar-officials who painted in their leisure. Being part of the dominant political force on an island without a national identity, they re – constructed their ideas of Chinese culture in different venues such as museums, universities, and the like. The formation and acceptance of literati art as the national form was more than a simple process of authoritarian enforcement of art education. In addition to the role that the National Palace Museum played in defining a canon of Chinese painting, other institutions of modern art, such as art schools, art journals and art galleries, were also crucial in implementing art education and organizing art exhibits that created a public awareness of the arts.<sup>58</sup> The traditional art of Pu Xinyu and his colleagues was eventually transformed by younger innovative artists, such as Liu Kuo – sung and his friends of the

Fifth Moon Group, into abstracted works of ink on paper. Today the guohua practiced in Taiwan has also become a viable expression of modern painting in China.

## V. Conclusion

The persistence of traditionalism in Chinese art is looked upon differently by people depending on their perceptions of art, modernity, and national cultures. For the humanist aesthetes, there is a belief that China, as is the case in other civilizations, has a continuous past and a distinctive culture. They also believe that this essential Chinese artistic spirit will continue to manifest itself as a significant form even when China experiences tumultuous changes in its politics and economics. A different interpretation of this anomaly is described by C. T. Hsia who wrote that Chinese artists have an “obsession with China.”<sup>59</sup> Although Hsia was characterizing writers of modern Chinese literature, the description could easily be used for Chinese painters. Fredric Jameson observed this phenomenon of persistence of tradition to be prevalent in non – Western cultures and introduced the controversial term “national allegory” to explain Third World cultures.<sup>60</sup> Jameson and his followers believe that the so – called Third World is so conditioned by its historical circumstances that its people, especially artists and historians, tend to claim an “unnatural” link between the past and nationhood. Whether Jameson’s critique is viable or not is a subject for a different paper. However, it should be noted that in spite of the globalization of contemporary art, the creation of and writing about Chinese art today continues to reflect an obsession with defining traditional “Chineseness” as a way to distinguish contemporary Chinese art from others. An example is the 1998 exhibition Inside Out: New Chinese Art.<sup>61</sup> Artists represented in Inside Out also included those who worked with ink and brush. However, these artists, like Xu Bing and Wenda Gu, confront rather than affirm tradition.<sup>62</sup>

At this time in China and Taiwan, there is a surge in the selling of traditional Chinese art and culture internationally and domestically through museum exhibitions, antique sales, and the development of heritage sites as tourist attractions. This revival of traditionalism in the various forms of culture in China today, most vividly manifested in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, is construed by some as one of many efforts undertaken by the fervently nationalistic Chinese to recoup the identity that was erased during its recent Communist past and to revive national art forms that were banned. On the other hand, this commodification of culture would seem to indicate that capitalism has erased the symbolic significance of national culture. But following Prasenjit Duara's explanation of this phenomenon in China, the marketing of culture could also mean an intensification of nationalism as the value of one of its products, art, increases.<sup>63</sup> What this all means with regard to the fate of traditional art in China can only be speculated. For now, I will close with the observation that I made in my other paper about Chinese art, museums, and Cold War politics: as long as impassioned nationalism prevails in China's development, it will continue to maintain a persistence of traditionalism in the making as well as in the interpretations of the various forms of art.<sup>64</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Critical studies of culture in recent years have made it difficult to come up with a single definition for "modern" or "tradition." In fact, as my paper will show, in Chinese studies, these two words mean different things depending on the context of who used them, and when and how they were used. Instead of attempting to conjure up a definitive meaning, I hope the nuances of these two terms will be self-explanatory as I discuss them in my paper.
2. In the last few decades, studies about modern art and modernism are no longer simply historical narratives of the development or definitions; rather they are often critical analysis of the phenomena. For example Meecham and Sheldon's Modern Art: A Critical Introduction (London: Routledge, 2000), starts their book asking the questions, "what, when and where was modernism?" For China and the so-called Third-world, authors like Tani. E. Barlow examines issues in books such as Formations of Colonial Modernity

- in East Asia (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). Others publish their alternative points – of – view as “third texts,” such as David Craven in his essay “The Latin American Origins of ‘Alternative Modernism’” in Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt, and Ziauddin Sardar, eds., The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory (London: Continuum, 2002): 24-34.
3. One of the earliest studies on this subject is Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, eds., The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). A critical analysis of this phenomenon in art can be found in Donald Preziosi’s “The Art of Art History,” in The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 507-525. Also, Richard R. Brettell, in his Modern Art: 1851-1929 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), included a chapter on “Nationalism and Internationalism in Modern Art,” a topic not usually discussed in introductory books on modern European art.
  4. The Chinese have been writing about art for over two thousand years. The appropriation of these writings into our present – day notion of art historical writings is discussed by Aida Yuen Wong in Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006). A list of art histories written during the early Republic Period can be found in the volume on modern art of Wang Bomin, ed., Zhongguo meishu tongshi (General History of Chinese Art). 10 vols. (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988).
  5. Julia F. Andrews, et al., Between the Thunder and the Rain: Chinese Paintings from the Opium War through the Cultural Revolution, 1840–1979 [Exh. cat.] (San Francisco: Echo Rock & Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2000), and Stephen Little, et al., New Songs on Ancient Tunes: 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Painting and Calligraphy from the Richard Fabian Collection [Exh. cat.] (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2007).
  6. Croizier, “Art and Society in Modern China – A Review Article,” in Journal of Asian Studies, vol. 49, no. 3 (August, 1990): 586.
  7. Ibid.: 586.
  8. Ibid.: 588.
  9. Michael Sullivan, Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century (London: Faber & Faber, 1959): 19. I use the pinyin romanization in my text unless the Chinese words are quotes from a book that uses a different system. I bracket the pinyin as reference.
  10. Ibid.: 19.
  11. Ibid.: 46.
  12. Kao Mayching, China’s Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937 (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1972): 228.
  13. My preliminary studies on survey texts of Chinese art show that art historians writing before World War II, in China and the West, often did not include discussions of modern developments.
  14. Of the numerous publications on the subject of Taiwan’s political and cultural development, Christopher Hughes, Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society (London: Routledge, 1997), is a good general introduction.
  15. Jonathan Spence, The Death of Woman Wang (New York: Penguin Books, 1979).
  16. Paul Cohen, Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on

- the Recent Chinese Past (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
17. Joshua A. Fogel, Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitô Konan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
  18. In his recent book, Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), T.J. Clark questions his own earlier ground – breaking research as he continues to rethink the issues of modernism.
  19. Most examinations of a distinctive Chinese notion of modern are studies on history and literature. A review of some of the recent research can be found in Hung – yok Ip, Tze – ki Hon, and Chiu – chun Lee. “The Plurality of Chinese Modernity: A Review of Recent Scholarship on the May Fourth Movement,” in Modern China, vol. 29, no. 4 (October, 2003): 490-509. A critical analysis of modernity in Chinese art is not as common. Aida Yuen Wong’s Parting the Mists is an example of research that is now being done (see note 4 above). Interestingly, most of the scholarly works are about the early developments, like the subject of Wong’s book, or about developments after the 1970s, i.e., contemporary art.
  20. Chu – tsing Li, Trends in Modern Chinese Painting (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1979).
  21. See Bruce Cumings, Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American – East Asian Relations at the End of the Century (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999): 1–8.
  22. Robert Ellsworth, Later Chinese Painting and Calligraphy. 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1986).
  23. See Melissa Chiu, “An Expanded Chinese Art History” in Vishakha N. Desai, ed., Asian Art History in the Twenty – First Century (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007): 211-228.
  24. Axel Schneider explains this phenomenon in “Bridging the Gap: Attempts at Constructing a ‘New’ Historical – Cultural Identity in the People’s Republic of China,” in East Asian History, vol. 22 (December, 2001): 129-144.
  25. See note 4 above.
  26. Zhang Shaoxia and Li Xiaoshan, Zhongguo xiandai huihuashi (A History of Contemporary Chinese Painting) (Nanjing: Jiangshu meishu chubanshe, 1986).
  27. Ralph Croizier, Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906 – 1951 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
  28. See note 4 above.
  29. Wan Qingli, Bing fei shuailuo de bainian: shijiu shiji zhongguo huihua shi (The Century was not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth-Century Chinese Painting) (Taipei: Hsiung–shi mei – shu, 2005).
  30. Julia F. Andrews, Painters and Politics in the People’s Republic of China: 1949 – 1979 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
  31. Julia F. Andrews & Kuiyi Shen, A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China [Exh. cat.] (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1998).
  32. See Of Nature and Friendship: Modern Chinese Painting from the Khoan and Michael Sullivan Collection [Exh. cat.] (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2001).
  33. Claudia Brown, et al., A Tradition Redefined: Modern and Contemporary Chinese Ink Paintings from the Chu-tsing Li Collection, 1950-2000 [Exh. cat.]

- (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2008).
34. Undoubtedly many art historians discussed above deliberated on artists who used traditional methods. However, most of them still suggest that only artists who transformed the tradition are more significant. I use the word “conservative” to signify the group of artists often neglected in modern Chinese art history. Their works are straightforward renditions of artistic forms from the past.
  35. Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).
  36. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1983).
  37. Aida Yuen Wong’s Parting the Mists (see note 4), although focusing on the role of Japan, is one of the more comprehensive discussions of the multifaceted development. In my recent work, “Chinese Art, the National Palace Museum, and Cold War Politics,” in Anna Bryzski, ed., Partisan Canons, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007): 115-134, I looked at the role of the museum in the construction of the canon of Chinese art.
  38. There is an interesting paper (in Chinese) by Martin Powers on the subject of how Western and Chinese art historians found equivalences and parallels between ancient Chinese art theories and modernism. See Powers’ “Xiandai zhuyi yu wenhua zhengzhi: zhongguo ti wei xifang yong (“Modernism and the Politics of Culture: Using “Chinese” Culture for ‘Western’ Modernity”),” in Song Xiaoxia, ed., “Zijue” yu zhongguo xiandai xing (“Self-awareness” and Chinese Modernity) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2006): 94-114.
  39. The most comprehensive study on this subject, in English, is still Kao’s China’s Response to the West in Art: 1898-1937 (see note 12). In recent years, many researches on the topic, written in Chinese, have been published in China and Taiwan. One example is Wu Fangzheng, “Tuhua yu shougong – zhongguo jindai yishu jiaoyu de dansheng” (“Drawings and Handicrafts – The Birth of Modern Chinese Art Education”), in Shanghai meishu fengyun 1872 – 1949: Shenbao yishu zhiliao tiaomu shuoyin (Art in Shanghai, 1872-1949: An Index of Articles, Reviews, Advertisements, and News Items Published in Shenbao Newspaper) (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academica Sinica, 2006): 1 – 45.
  40. Quote copied from David Der – wei Wang, “In the Name of the Real,” in Maxwell K. Hearn & Judith G. Smith, eds., Chinese Art: Modern Expressions (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001): 40.
  41. See Ralph Croizier, Art and Revolution in Modern China: The Lingnan (Cantonese) School of Painting, 1906 – 1951 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
  42. “Oriental” is the term used by Aida Yuen Wong. It is sometimes translated as “Eastern – style.”
  43. Aida Yuen Wong: 66
  44. The painting is now in the Huang Binhong Memorial Museum in Hangzhou. It is reproduced in Craig Clunas, Art in China (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 208. The translation is also taken from Clunas’ text.
  45. See Pamela Kyle Crossley, “The Historiography of Modern China,” in Michael Bentley, ed., Companion to Historiography (London: Routledge, 1984), Paul Cohen’s Discovering History in China: American Historical

- Writing on the Recent Chinese Past (see note 16), and Joshua A. Fogel's Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitô Konan (see note 17). For specific discussions about art history, see Aida Yuen Wong and more recently Jerome Silbergeld's "Changing Views of Change: The Song – Yuan Transition in Chinese Painting Histories," in Vishakha N. Desai, ed., Asian Art History in the Twenty-First Century (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007): 40-63.
46. In his commentary on my paper, Hong Zaixin duly pointed out the interactions of these traditional artists. He suggested that I should also examine the importance of the epigraphic movement for the artists working in the North. I thank him for bringing the subject to my attention and will develop it at another time.
  47. I will not annotate general information about the lives of three artists under discussion here unless the information is relevant to the points I will be making.
  48. An example of a study, in English, of Huang's painting, see Jason C. Kuo. Innovation within Tradition: The Painting of Huang Binhong [Exh. cat.] (Williamstown: Williams College Museum of Art, 1989).
  49. Stephen Little, et al., New Songs on Ancient Tunes: 19<sup>th</sup>–20th Century Chinese Paintings and Calligraphy from the Richard Fabian Collection [Exh. cat.] (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2007): cat. 125b.
  50. I had the privilege of studying some of the notebooks, which are now in a private collection.
  51. Literally translated as "the revival of painting studies as national salvation," the phrase is from his essay "Huaxue pian (Studies of Paintings)" collected in Chen Fan, ed., Huang Binhong huayu lu (Collection of Huang Binhong's Writings) (Hong Kong: Shanghai shuju, 1976). 93.
  52. Huang's belief in the value of Song painting is expressed in several of his essays. A prolific writer, Huang left many writings that are only now being organized and studied. Much of the research from these is still focused on his ideas about painting, not his ideas about politics.
  53. See Jin Cheng, "Beilou lunhua" ("Beilou's discourse on paintings"), in Hu she yuekan, nos. 1 – 10 (Nov. 1927 – Sept. 1928): 16.
  54. New Songs on Ancient Tunes, *op. cit.*: cat. 93b.
  55. See *ibid.*: cat. 85.
  56. See my dissertation, The Art and Life of P'u Hsin – yu (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1989).
  57. There are numerous works, in Chinese, on the development of art in Taiwan. For two recent works, in English, see Jason Kuo's Art and Cultural Politics in Postwar Taiwan (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), and more recently Yuko Kikuchi, ed., Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
  58. The importance of cultural institutions in the formation of our ideas about art is now commonly acknowledged based on Pierre Bourdieu's seminal work, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (London: Routledge, 1984).
  59. See C.T. Hsia, A History of Modern Chinese Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
  60. This is discussed in Jameson's essay, "Third – World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," in Social Text, vol. 15 (Fall, 1986): 65-88.

61. Gao Minglu, ed., Inside Out: New Chinese Art [Exh. cat.] (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1998).
62. For more recent debates about these issues, see Gao Shiming's paper, "Micrology: The Micropolitics in Chinese Contemporary Art," in Vishakha N. Desai, ed., Asian Art History in the Twenty – First Century (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007): 169-178.
63. See Prasenjit Duara's Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995): 381.
64. See Ju, "Chinese Art, the National Palace Museum, and Cold War Politics" (see note 37).